

May 2011

[Visit NETWORK's Website](#)



**MIND
THE
GAP!**

Dear *Connection* Reader:

DID YOU KNOW...

The wealthiest 1% of our population owns more than 90% of us combined!

The wealthiest 10% of our population owns more than ¾ of the nation's wealth!

The median African American household has less than ten cents of wealth for every dollar of wealth owned by the median white family!

You may wonder how these disparities became so extreme – and why so few people are talking about them. If so, join our campaign!

Today – May 19 – we are launching our new [Mind the Gap! campaign](#) to tell our nation about how the wealth gap robs ALL of us. This is not in just a financial sense. The impact of the gap is widespread, resulting in a crack in the very foundation of who we are as a nation.

Please read more below, and check out the *Mind the Gap!* campaign links at the end of Sr. Simone Campbell's article.

And, as always, let us know what you think. You can respond directly in the comments sections in

our new *Mind the Gap!* blog (www.networklobby.org/nep/blog) or by emailing us at connection@networklobby.org.

And please join our campaign today by going to www.networklobby.org/join-mind-the-gap!

Peace,

Stephanie Niedringhaus, NETWORK Communications Coordinator

Today's Extreme Wealth and Income Disparities Hurt Us All

By Simone Campbell, SSS, NETWORK Executive Director

Every day here at NETWORK, we struggle with the political reality of our nation. We attempt to embody Catholic Social Teaching by working on safety net issues for struggling families. We advocate for comprehensive immigration reform and healthcare for all. We reach out to people outside our country in order to advocate for a foreign policy and trade policies that will benefit other peoples and not just corporate America.

But in the midst of the detail advocacy that we sometimes call the “weeds of politics,” we try to step back and see causal factors that are at the source of many societal problems. This happened for us in December 2010, when many of us read the book *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*, written by British researchers Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett.

In *Spirit Level*, the authors demonstrate that in societies where there is greater equality in income there is a higher standard of living for everyone. They look at such factors as community life and social relations, mental health and drug use, physical health and life expectancy, obesity, educational performance, teenage births, violence, imprisonment, and social mobility (or lack of it) and found a direct correlation to quality of life and smaller income disparities. Using these United Nations measures they found that the United States has the second highest income disparity in the developed world. They also found that time and again the United States has had the worst quality of life in these various measures. They went on to point out how this quality of life issue erodes life for everyone. We realized a nation with policies more in keeping with Catholic Social Teaching creates a society that is better for everyone.

We then began to look further into this issue and came to know that it is not only an income disparity but an even greater wealth disparity that is getting our country down. We found the data in the Measure of America study (www.measureofamerica.org) to be invaluable. There, the American Human Development Project breaks down data on health, education and income by state and each congressional district. It also breaks out the information by gender and race and ethnicity. It is a great resource for anyone who does this work.

We were shocked by what we found. The more we talked about the income and wealth gaps, the more we realized that in many ways they are the untold story of what is wrong in our nation. The problems are the HUGE disparity that exists – and that we know so little about the reality of the

different worlds.

We therefore decided that we needed to share this information with you, our members, and try to reach out beyond our organization and publicize this stunning reality. In order to do this we have created our “Mind the Gap!” campaign to let people know about the wealth gap in our nation and how it is bad for all of us. We hope that you find it as surprising and disturbing as we did. We encourage you to share the information with friends and colleagues.

We know that our faith calls us to respond to the needs of those around us. As Pope Benedict says in his Encyclical *Charity in Truth*, “Love—caritas—is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace.” Let us be emboldened by this information and speak out for the good of our nation. Everyone in our country needs to “Mind the Gap!”

HERE IS THE [LINK](#) TO OUR NEW CAMPAIGN WEBSITE:

www.networklobby.org/campaign/mind-the-gap

A sample of what you will find there:

Video

Why should you mind? Watch [Part 3](#) of our video series.

(<http://www.networklobby.org/nep/blog/video-3-why-you-should-mind-gap>)

Quiz

How big is the wealth gap? Test your knowledge with this [quiz](#)!

(www.propofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=who-owns-america)

Wealth 101

How big is the wealth gap? Learn the facts with the Wealth Gap 101 [fact sheet](#).

(www.networklobby.org/files/Wealth%20Gap%20101_0.pdf)

And be sure to join us at <http://www.networklobby.org/join-mind-the-gap>.

As always, we need your support at all levels.

Please consider making a contribution to this campaign for justice.

[Click here](#) (www.networklobby.org/join-us) to donate to our lobbying on this issue.

[Click here](#) (<https://npo.networkforgood.org/Donate/Donate.aspx?npoSubscriptionId=5634>) to

donate to our educating others on this issue.

NETWORK's ministry of justice, including this Legislative Update, is funded through the generosity of our members. To **donate to NETWORK or become a NETWORK member**:

<http://www.networklobby.org/join-us>

Thank you for your activism, your prayers, your financial support and your solidarity with our mission of economic and social transformation.

To make updates in membership information or to stop receiving this weekly legislative update, reply to this message and provide direction about updates or unsubscribing.

NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
25 E St. NW, Suite 200 Washington, DC 20003 (202) 347-9797
www.networklobby.org

If you no longer wish to receive e-mail from us, please click [here](#).

powered by
capwiz 